

Marketing Factors Influencing the Repurchase of Recycled Textiles: Evidence from SHG Clusters in Coimbatore and Tirupur

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Abstract: *This article explores the marketing factors that shape why customers who buy recycled products from SHGs often don't come back for a second purchase from Self-Help Group (SHG) clusters in the Coimbatore and Tirupur regions of Tamil Nadu. These two cities are at the center of India's textile and knitwear industry- Tirupur is widely known as the "Knitwear Capital of India," while Coimbatore is a major hub for textile manufacturing and recycling. Using research on how Indian consumers think about and buy circular textile products, along with real-world examples from SHG recycling projects in the region, this analysis highlights five main reasons people purchase again: the value and quality of the product, understanding of environmental benefits and certifications, trust and reduced concerns about risk, affordable pricing compared to other options, and the influence of community or social approval. The findings show that, although people in Tamil Nadu are increasingly aware of and interested in buying recycled textiles, whether they actually buy again mainly depends on tackling worries about quality, creating trusted certification systems, overcoming negative perceptions about products made from waste, and keeping prices competitive with new textile products. This article helps the discussion on circular economies by offering a practical framework for understanding what encourages repeat buying in local SHG-driven supply chains in developing countries.*

Keywords: Recycled textiles, repurchase intention, Self-Help Groups, marketing factors, circular economy, Coimbatore, Tirupur, sustainable consumption, India.

1. Introduction

Even with the fashion industry undergoing a transformation, globally the textile industry remains amongst one of the most destructive sectors for the environment, producing roughly 92 million tonnes of waste every year and less than 15% being either recycled or reused. As a leading textile producer and consumer these challenges manifest urgently as India generates over 7 million tonnes of textile waste each year – nearly 60% post-consumer. The country also has an incomplete recycling infrastructure with a significant amount of it functioning outside informal systems— and less than 50% of textile waste is diverted from landfills.

Circular economy models have gained substantial traction across Tamil Nadu's textile belt in response. Coimbatore-Tirupur industrial belt, supposedly the textiles capital of India has evolved as a laboratory for circular textile innovation. While most of the knitwear exported by India comes from Tirupur, Coimbatore has many textile mills and recycling facilities. In this industrial landscape, compact Self-Help Group (SHG) clusters have emerged with self-sustained frameworks for textile recycling which brings together bottom-up entrepreneurship and circular economy approaches.

Such SHG enterprises are distinctive organisational forms—small-scale production units owned by the community and embedded in local industrial waste streams. And the unsolved challenge is how to make sure consumers keep repurchasing their products. The initial purchase may be triggered by novelty, altruism or situational factors, but the second purchase is dependent on marketing factors that indicate

reliability, value, and alignment with consumer expectations over time.

By synthesising recent empirical research on Indian consumer behaviour towards circular textile products with ground-level evidence from SHG operations in the region, the analysis provides actionable insights for practitioners and contributes to the under-researched intersection of circular economy, grassroots enterprise, and consumer marketing in emerging economy industrial clusters.

2. Theoretical Framework: Understanding Repurchase in Circular Textile Markets

2.1 The Attitude-Behaviour Gap in Sustainable Consumption

Understanding repurchase requires distinguishing it from first-time purchase intention. A well-documented "attitude-behaviour gap" or "intention-behaviour gap" characterises green consumption: consumers express positive attitudes toward sustainable products but fail to translate these into repeat purchases. In the Indian context, recent empirical research employing the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) models has provided nuanced insights into this phenomenon.

A study of 425 Indian consumers investigating purchase intention for recycled clothing found that **perceived risk** and **environmental certification** emerged as the most potent stimuli affecting consumer attitude, which then mediates the relationship between stimulus and purchase intention. This finding is significant: it suggests that abstract environmental

concern is less predictive of recycled textile purchase than concrete factors like risk perception and trust signals.

2.2 From Purchase Intention to Repurchase Behaviour

For repurchase specifically, the dynamics shift in important ways. First purchase may be experimental, altruistic, or driven by price promotions; repurchase signals satisfaction, trust, and perceived value sustained over time. The SOR model, integrated with TPB, identifies four key stimuli influencing recycled clothing purchase intention: perceived benefit, perceived risk, product knowledge, and environmental certification.

Qualitative research on consumer experiences with recycled and reused clothing has identified five experiential dimensions that shape ongoing consumption decisions:

- **Sensory dimension:** tactile qualities, appearance, and even scent of recycled textiles
- **Affective dimension:** emotions including pride (in sustainable choice) and shame (concerns about wearing "waste-derived" products)
- **Behavioural dimension:** development of new decision-making rules for evaluating textile purchases
- **Cognitive dimension:** learning and unlearning about material provenance and circularity
- **Social dimension:** feedback from others and manifestation of personal values through consumption choices

For repurchase to occur, all five dimensions must be positively reinforced through repeated consumption experiences. A single negative sensory experience (e.g., fabric pilling, unusual odour) can override positive environmental attitudes and terminate repurchase intention.

2.3 Contextual Factors in the Coimbatore-Tirupur Region

The Coimbatore-Tirupur textile cluster presents distinctive contextual factors that shape recycled textile markets. Tirupur's knitwear industry generates substantial hosiery waste— offcuts, defective fabric, and end-of-roll remnants—that SHGs can access at low cost. This creates a supply-side advantage: raw material costs are minimal, allowing SHGs to price recycled products competitively against virgin textile alternatives.

However, the region also presents challenges. Consumers in textile-manufacturing cities possess high product knowledge about textile quality, construction, and durability. This expertise raises quality expectations, potentially increasing perceived risk for recycled products. Additionally, the prevalence of low-cost virgin textile products in local markets creates pricing pressure that recycled products must navigate.

3. Key Marketing Factors Influencing Repurchase: Evidence from SHG Clusters

3.1 Perceived Quality and Product Performance

The most direct driver of repurchase in the Coimbatore-Tirupur context is product performance. Evidence from the Nagamangalam SHG cluster (approximately 30 km from

Tiruchirappalli, within the broader regional textile ecosystem) illustrates this dynamic. The "Inaintha Kaigal Women's Doormat Producers Group," comprising 23 women from a nomadic tribal community, weaves doormats from hosiery waste purchased from Tirupur suppliers. Each doormat sells for ₹10-15, with members earning up to ₹3,000 monthly.

The group's success in securing repeat customers stems from product durability. Doormats woven from knitwear scraps, when properly constructed, offer comparable or superior durability to conventional alternatives. However, quality consistency remains a challenge: variations in waste material texture and thickness can produce inconsistent finished products, affecting repurchase rates.

Table 1: Showing the interventions for SHG clusters to enhance repurchase through quality signals

Marketing Intervention	Mechanism	Evidence from Region
Standardised sizing and finishing	Reduces perceived variability risk	Current practices vary by SHG; standardisation limited
Sample-based quality demonstrations	Allows tactile evaluation before purchase	Occasional exhibition sales; not systematised
Post-purchase follow-up	Identifies quality issues before they terminate repurchase	Not currently practised by most SHGs

3.2 Environmental Certification and Trust Signals

Research from the Indian context establishes environmental certification as one of the most potent stimuli affecting consumer attitude towards recycled clothing. Certification serves two functions: it reduces information asymmetry (consumers cannot easily verify recycled content claims) and provides third-party validation of environmental benefits.

In the Coimbatore-Tirupur region, large-scale recyclers have leveraged certification effectively. Sulochana Cotton Spinning Mills aligns with nine of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and aims to become 100% carbon neutral by 2027. These commitments resonate with global apparel brands and provide downstream credibility. However, SHG clusters typically lack access to certification mechanisms, which require financial resources and technical expertise unavailable at the grassroots level.

The absence of certification creates a marketing disadvantage for SHG products. Consumers cannot differentiate between SHG-recycled textiles (which may have higher labour value and lower carbon footprints) and informal-sector recycled products (which may have questionable quality and environmental practices). For repurchase, this information gap increases perceived risk, reducing the likelihood of repeat buying.

Recommendation: SHG federations in the Coimbatore-Tirupur region should explore group certification models, where cluster-level certification is obtained collectively, reducing per-unit costs. Alternatively, digital traceability mechanisms (e.g., QR codes linking to production provenance) could provide low-cost trust signals.

3.3 Perceived Risk Reduction

Perceived risk consistently emerges as a significant negative predictor of recycled textile purchase intention. Five types of risk are relevant to SHG products:

- 1) **Performance risk** – Will the product function as expected?
- 2) **Social risk** – Will others negatively judge my use of "waste-derived" products?
- 3) **Health risk** – Are recycled textiles free from contaminants?
- 4) **Value risk** – Is the price fair relative to quality received?
- 5) **Provenance risk** – Is the recycled content claim authentic?

In the SHG context, performance and social risks appear most salient. The "out-of-garbage" stigma associated with recycled textiles can deter repurchase, particularly for products used in visible settings. Evidence from qualitative research on consumer experiences with recycled clothing indicates that shame (affective dimension) can negatively influence repeat purchase, while pride (in manifesting environmental values through consumption) positively influences it.

For SHG clusters, professional storytelling can address social risk by reframing recycled textiles as "upcycled" or "reclaimed" rather than "waste-derived." The Nagamangalam SHG's narrative- transforming hardship into self-respect through weaving- provides a compelling origin story that can shift consumer perception from waste to empowerment. However, this narrative requires deliberate marketing communication, which SHGs currently lack.

3.4 Price Affordability and Value Proposition

Price plays a complex role in repurchase decisions for recycled textiles. On one hand, price sensitivity is high among Indian consumers, particularly in tier-2 and tier-3 cities. On the other hand, excessively low pricing may signal poor quality, paradoxically reducing repurchase intention.

The Nagamangalam SHG's doormat pricing of ₹10-15 positions products at the lower end of the market. This pricing reflects both low raw material costs (hosiery waste purchased in bulk from Tirupur) and the group's market positioning. However, low margins limit the SHG's ability to invest in quality improvements, packaging, or marketing—all of which could enhance repurchase.

Strategic implication: SHG recycled textiles should avoid competing solely on price with virgin products or informal recycled goods. Instead, pricing should reflect the full value proposition—environmental benefit, social impact, and product quality—with communication strategies that justify the price-value equation.

3.5 Environmental Knowledge and Consumer Education

The relationship between environmental knowledge and recycled textile purchase is more complex than often assumed. Italian consumer research found that environmental knowledge and solidarity values have significant positive effects on attitudes and purchasing behaviour towards circular

products, with membership in environmental associations strongly associated with sustainable clothing purchases. However, Indian research suggests that environmental consciousness shows weaker effects on purchase intention than knowledge and green self-efficacy.

This finding has important implications for SHG marketing strategies. Simply communicating environmental benefits may be insufficient to drive repurchase. Instead, marketing should focus on:

- **Product knowledge:** Helping consumers understand how to evaluate recycled textile quality
- **Usage confidence:** Demonstrating appropriate use cases and care instructions
- **Outcome visibility:** Making environmental and social impacts tangible and measurable

4. Synthesis: A Repurchase Framework for SHG Clusters

Drawing on the theoretical framework and empirical evidence, Figure 1 presents an integrated framework of marketing factors influencing repurchase of recycled textiles from SHG clusters in Coimbatore and Tirupur.

4.1 Direct Factors

Product Quality and Consistency

- Dimensional stability, colourfastness, durability
- Absence of defects or contamination
- → If positive → repeat purchase likely

Price-Value Equation

- Affordability relative to virgin alternatives
- Justification through social/environmental value
- → If perceived as fair → repeat purchase likely

Trust and Certification

- Third-party validation of recycled content
- Provenance transparency

4.2 Moderating Factors

Consumer Environmental Knowledge

- Moderates effect of certification on attitude
- Higher knowledge → stronger certification effect

Social Norms

- Community endorsement of recycled textiles
- Visibility of recycled product use in social settings
- Positive norms → reinforce repurchase

Purchase Context

- First purchase (experimental/altruistic) vs. repeat purchase (satisfaction-driven)
- Different factors dominate at different stages

4.3 Inhibiting Factors

Perceived Risk

- Performance, social, health, value, provenance risks
- High perceived risk → repurchase terminated

Stigma

- "Out-of-garbage" perception
- Requires narrative reframing

5. Practical Implications for SHG Clusters in the Region

Based on the analysis, the following practical recommendations emerge for SHG clusters operating in the Coimbatore-Tirupur textile ecosystem.

5.1 Quality Assurance Systems

SHG clusters should implement standardised quality checks at three stages: raw material sorting (rejecting unsuitable hosiery waste), production monitoring (ensuring consistent weaving tension and finishing), and final inspection (grading products for different market segments). The Nagamangalam SHG's practice of sorting waste by texture before weaving represents an initial step; this should be systematised with written standards and documented inspections.

5.2 Certification and Traceability

Group certification through SHG federations presents the most feasible pathway. Federations can aggregate demand for certification services, negotiate with certifying bodies, and share costs across member SHGs. Digital traceability using QR codes- linking products to production dates, weaver identities, and waste sources- offers a lower-cost alternative that may achieve similar trust-building effects.

5.3 Narrative Marketing

The transformation narrative exemplified by the Nagamangalam SHG- from nomadic tribal livelihoods to self-respect through weaving- should be systematically incorporated into product packaging, point-of-sale materials, and digital platforms. This narrative addresses social risk by reframing recycled products as vehicles for social empowerment rather than as waste-derived commodities.

5.4 Channel Strategy

Direct-to-consumer channels (exhibitions, village markets, SHG-owned retail outlets) allow for consumer education and relationship building that supports repurchase. However, wholesale channels (supplying to retailers, corporate gift buyers) provide scale. A hybrid approach—selective wholesale for standardised products, direct channels for premium differentiated products- may optimise both reach and relationship quality.

6. Conclusion

This article has examined the marketing factors influencing repurchase intentions for recycled textiles produced by SHG clusters in the Coimbatore and Tirupur regions of Tamil Nadu. Drawing on recent empirical research on Indian consumer behaviour towards circular textile products and ground-level evidence from SHG operations in the region, the analysis identifies five key factors: perceived quality and product

performance, environmental certification and trust signals, perceived risk reduction, price affordability and value proposition, and environmental knowledge and consumer education.

The findings suggest that while consumers in Tamil Nadu demonstrate growing awareness of and intention to purchase recycled textiles, the translation of intention into actual repurchase behaviour depends critically on overcoming the attitude-behaviour gap through marketing interventions that reduce perceived risk and provide credible quality signals. Environmental certification emerges as particularly potent in shaping consumer attitude, while the absence of certification mechanisms for SHG products represents a significant competitive disadvantage relative to larger recyclers.

For SHG clusters to capture repeat purchase value, strategic investments in quality assurance, group certification, narrative marketing, and consumer feedback systems are indicated. These investments require initial capital and technical assistance that SHGs typically lack, suggesting a role for government programmes, NGOs, and corporate social responsibility initiatives in supporting the circular economy transition at the grassroots level.

SHG clusters within this ecosystem, despite their resource constraints, demonstrate that grassroots circular economy models can generate both environmental and social value. With targeted marketing interventions that address the specific drivers of repurchase, these clusters can convert first-time buyers into repeat customers, creating the revenue stability necessary for long-term sustainability.

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